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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

To Principals of Collegiate Institutes, Vocational, High and Continuation Schools

Re Departmental Examinations in Grade XIII English Literature and Composition

1. THE ENGLISH LITERATURE EXAMINATION OF 1948

The following information in regard to the work of the candidates at the Upper School examination of 1948 in English Literature is presented in the hope that it may prove helpful to teachers of English in the secondary schools. It is to be understood that the allotment of marks to the several parts of the course and the comments upon the candidates' answers apply only to this Examination and that neither the scale of valuations nor the form of questions will necessarily be duplicated in future examinations in the subject.

The answer papers were evaluated on the basis of 100 marks, which were divided as follows: Shakespeare—21; Longer Poems—25; Shorter Poems—18; *Youth* or *Under the Greenwood Tree*—12; Short Stories and Essays—12; Sight Poetry—12.

I. FORM OF ANSWERS

It remains important that answers should be properly spaced, accurately numbered for parts and sub-parts, and written legibly. Quotations should not only be worked into sentences which are structurally correct, but should be identified as quotations by the use of quotation marks.

Candidates should give due attention to a reasonable distribution of the examination time among the questions on the paper. It was found frequently in 1948 answer papers that, because so much time had been given to the answering of question 1, the candidate hurried unduly in answering later questions and sometimes failed to complete the paper. Since in the preparation of the examination care is taken to secure a well-balanced and representative arrangement of the questions, candidates should recognize that neglect of any question is serious.

Candidates who have had regular training in writing on formal examinations during the school year, not only in Grade XIII, but also in the lower grades, are at a distinct advantage with respect to effective organization of their answers at a departmental examination in English Literature.

Weaker students by failing to use topic sentences gave rambling answers which did not bear directly on the question. Training in the analysis of the wording of the questions would help to avoid a mere paraphrase or synopsis of a poem or story where a critical analysis is required.

Full credit could not be given to merely tabulated answers.

II. ERRORS IN SPELLING

In 1948 as in former years, deductions to a maximum of ten were made for errors in spelling. It is suggested that because an appreciable number of all candidates writing failed as a result of errors in spelling and the grades of many others were adversely affected, some time might be advantageously devoted even in Upper School classes to the spelling of such words as *rhyme, rhythm, its, soliloquies, tragedy, resembles, suspense, simile, alliteration, sequel, speech, receive, repetition, superstition, scheme, woman, stubbornness, metaphor, performed, significance, preceding, weird, eerie, Caesar, there, effect, occurred, Michael, occasion, beginning, prophecy, prophesy, led, forsaken.*

III. FAULTY USAGE

Candidates should be reminded that answers should be written in clear, correct English, and that major errors in sentence structure, bad grammar, persistent lack of punctuation, conspicuous failure to use capitals and serious misuse of words result in loss of marks. Teachers are urged to insist on the use of correct forms in all written work in English Literature during the school year.

IV. NOTES ON THE ANSWERS

Question 1(a):

This question was answered with average success. Many candidates seemed insufficiently practised in the art of literary criticism to deal with the term "dramatic development" with any degree of assurance. As a result they too often wrote mere narrations of the events of the scene (and somtimes of more than one scene). Candidates appear unaware, too, that "dramatic development" might be considered under such a varied list of headings as the following: creation of atmosphere or setting; causing of other action of dramatic importance; revelation of qualities of character and of changes of character; creation of suspense; marking of a crisis, a sub-climax, or a climax; arousing of special feelings toward persons in the play.

Too often a candidate dealt with only one of these aspects. The following answer to this question was considered satisfactory:

> The most important scene in Macbeth is that in which the ghost of Banquo appears, and in which the fortunes of Macbeth begin to ebb. This far, the action has been going all for Macbeth, now we see his gradual downfall commencing. The feast has been set; the guests have been invited and have arrived; only the special guest, Banquo, has not yet arrived. Then, amidst the jocularity and decorum of the ceremonial dinner, the cut-throat hired by Macbeth reports Banquo's death and Fleance's escape, and then, in response to Macbeth's command of "Fail not our feast," the ghost of Banquo appears. Macbeth's utter loss of control and highly imaginative mind are shown as, before the whole court, he shouts, "Shake not thy gory locks at me. Thou can'st not say that I have done it." This scene also brings out Lady Macbeth's iron will and presence of mind as she tries to explain it away to the court, and tries, by the lashing of her tongue, to bring Macbeth to his senses. When at last she realizes that he is too far gone for control, she dismisses the court, and shows her understanding and love for her husband by refusing to nag or rail upon him for almost giving them away. Here in this scene also, do we see the completion of the degeneration of, what was, at the beginning of the play, a more or less noble character. He decides upon recourse to the witches, and begins to formulate in his mind the useless slaughter of Macduff's family, an event which occurs after the fulfilment of his fears at the Witches' cave.

This is the centre-stone of the play. From here, we rush forward more and more rapidly, to the downfall of Macbeth which is now inevitable.

Question 1(b):

Answers to this question also demonstrated frequently the candidate's inability to deal analytically with the "dramatic use" of the example of humour or pathos noted. Presumably students were more familiar with the term "humour" than with "pathos." As a result they often attempted to find examples of humour in a play in which few such existed, at the same time overlooking numerous instances of pathos admirably suited to the purpose of the question.

Merely drawing attention to the humour or pathos without showing its dramatic function was a common fault.

It is desirable that students be given practice during the school year in dealing with analytical questions of this type. The following answer to this question was considered satisfactory:

> Immediately following the murder scene, Shakespeare introduces the porter's soliloquy to relieve the dramatic tension in accordance with the principle of alternation. Coming immediately after the murder scene it is rather favourably received by the audience. The topical allusion to the farmer who committed suicide, to the Jesuit priest, and the man who stole out of a French hose are pleasing to the Elizabethan audience. There is an element of dramatic irony as the porter imagines himself as the porter of hell-gate, as he little realizes the real import of his statement. He also parodies Macbeth's aural hallucinations as he imagines the knocking to be people seeking admission to hell. The contrast served between the two scenes inspires his speech with the same amount of humour as the suspense of the previous one does it with horror. This action and language are amusing to the audience and the euphemism in his closing remark about the "Pirmrose path to the everlasting bonfire" leaves the audience prepared for the drama which immediately follows.

Question 2:

The answers to this question showed that the candidates had understood and appreciated the story of Michael. Some, however, interpreted the word "significance" in too narrow a sense and consequently their answers were incomplete rather than incorrect.

The sheepfold is important in the story because it is a symbol of the covenant between Michael and Luke and bcause it contributes to the portrayal of Michael's character. It is also important because it gives unity to the story by motivating it, by forming an integral part of the plot, and by constituting the centre of interest in the final picture presented to the reader. As part of the desolate countryside pictured at the beginning of the poem, it contributes to the pervading atmosphere of loneliness and frustration. Finally, it forms a part of that infinitely pathetic picture of Michael alone by his unfinished task.

Many candidates, while realizing the importance of the sheepfold to the plot and to the portrayal of Michael's character, failed to grasp its significance in relation to the unity of the poem and to its emotional power.

Question 3:

The general practice of writing a paraphrase of the printed stanza (to which few marks could be assigned) would seem to indicate that candidates failed to determine what the question required or were ignorant of the content of the poem. This emphasizes the necessity of giving students more practice in interpreting a question and of impressing upon them that a knowledge of the content of the poems for intensive study is absolutely necessary.

The following was considered a satisfactory answer:

> Gray applies the thought expressed in the lines to human life by telling what might have happened if the poor had had a chance to learn, but their poverty held them back. He says that in the village there might have been poets, musicians or rulers of governments but the people so gifted could not develop their talents because of their poverty. The poets he mentions in the words,
>
> "Some mute, inglorious Milton,"
>
> and the rulers by,
>
> "Hands the rod of empire might have swayed,"
>
> and also,
>
> "Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood."
>
> Therefore in the small villages and hamlets there could be many people, who, if they had a good education, might have become famous, but could not because of poverty.

Question 4 (First option):

This question on poetic appreciation was handled much more ably than the similar question on last year's paper. Too often, however, candidates showed themselves more conversant with the jargon of poetic criticism than they were with what "good poetry" really is. Candidates would list similes, metaphors, alliteration, apostrophe, personifications, and other rhetorical devices, and make no attempt to show how or why these contributed to the total imaginative and emotional impact of the poem. Some even seemed to feel that if they had named the metre and the rhyme scheme they had proved the poem, and were convinced that five iambic feet guaranteed the excellence of any verse. Comments such as "Truly from the pen of a master" should have been avoided.

The value of the specific illustration of points had apparently been well learned, but many candidates did not know how to introduce quotations or references, or to punctuate sentences containing them. Many, too, showed that they did not know the meaning of some of the basic words in the passage; "sepulchre," for instance, was frequently interpreted as church or cathedral.

To sum up: students had learned to recognize and name poetic devices, but had not learned to discern the contribution these made to the poetic merits of the passage. The positive qualities of the passage as a whole, its wedding of rhythm and emotion, its impassioned sincerity, the depth and energy of its thought, its musical sweep, in short, its power and beauty were left unmentioned by most candidates. The following answer to this question was considered satisfactory:

> *Alliteration* is well used in this passage in such phrases as "steep sky's."
>
> Many excellent *similes* such as "Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves" add to the beauty of the passage.
>
> The *description* in these verses is very vivid, and such ideas as "tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean" because of their originality and freshness give the poem a breathless beauty. "The locks of the approaching storm" compared to "the bright hair of some Maenad" is a quick sketch of a scene a lesser poet would have needed many lines to describe perhaps not as clearly and imaginatively. The imaginative quality of Shelley's description throughout makes it different, and adds to a feeling of excitement already created by the poet.

The *personification* of the wind, so that the entire poem is addressed to "O wild west wind" is the most outstanding personification in the poem. Lesser ones like "the dying year" and "the closing night" add to the feeling of intimacy with Nature.

The *emotion* concentrated into this passage is perhaps its greatest appeal. The cry to the wind to "Hear!" is at once stirring and touching. The wind is both a source of "rain and lightning," the rain being life giving to the earth below and "the dirge of the dying year." The contrast and comparison is carried further as the wind is first "a stream 'mid the deep sky's commotion" and then "an airy surge."

The breathless quality of the poem is produced by the *rhythm* and *rhyme* of the lines. Generally iambic pentameter, there are several lines with an extra unaccented beat which add lightness to the metre. The a b a, b c b, c d c rhyme also gives the poem a lilt comparable to the "airy surge" of the wind. The *form* of the passage, in four three-line terzettos, and a couplet at the end with the appeal at the climax is, while not novel, uncommon and adds further to the attraction of the poem.

> The entire spontaneity and great rush of emotion addressed intimately to "thou" envelops the reader and carries him with it to the cry "O, hear!"

Question 4 (Second option):

The lines from "An Epistle" about "knowledge increased beyond the fleshly faculty," were the basis of the optional question. On the whole, candidates seemed to find this question much easier than the Shelley question, and generally did well with it.

Many explained the four lines by means of a paraphrase, and succeeded in earning full marks for the (a) part. Part (b) was a little more difficult. The commonest mistake arose from failing to distinguish between important examples of Lazarus' new scale of values, such as his ignoring of the Roman invasion, and trivial incidental touches, such as his watching a fly on the ceiling. Many endeavoured to explain *why* Lazarus was perturbed at some chance gesture of his child, when the whole point of the illustration was that such perturbation was *inexplicable* by the standards of "the fleshly faculty." The following answer to this question was considered satisfactory:

(a) In this case suppose we call the wealth the man has found "knowledge"—an understanding far in excess of anything that ordinary brains may possess. It is as though the wisdom of Heaven were shown to the spirit of a mortal—it is as though Lazarus is compelled to live on earth even while knowing the secret of the great Beyond.

(b) Lazarus may seem apathetic to the superficial observer, but to Karshish he possesses a great secret. The plea "Whence has this man the balm that brightens all?" is a spoken desire for a peace of mind that Karshish (and all people) seek. Lazarus regards the passing of a mule with gourds and the imminent approach of Vespasian's armies as of equal importance. Surely this is indicative of a supernatural insight.

When Lazarus' child sickens unto death, the man remains untroubled, and yet a word or even a glance from the same child will make him sick with worry. Surely this bespeaks divine insight.

Lastly, Lazarus' "be it as God please" confounds the physician who realizes himself how futile it is to argue with prejudice. Surely this man, loving God's creation, determined to serve God only as he please, and not seeking converts as

> ". . . madmen thirst to do"

possesses supernatural wisdom.

Question 5:

Candidates who were well-trained in writing précis enjoyed an advantage in answering this question in that they were able to analyze the poem and summarize its thought clearly.

Many students quoted the poem uncritically, often without a genuine attempt at summary or paraphrase. In the best answers the argument was expressed in the candidate's own words, and quotations were used merely to illustrate or emphasize a statement. The following answer to this question was considered satisfactory:

On His Blindness.

When Milton thinks of his blindness which has come on him before even half his life span was over, and thinks that his gift for writing is now useless he is very unhappy. He feels that if he cannot write he might as well be dead and foolishly asks if God expects him to work when he is

> blind. However, his patience makes him realize that his work is not really important, for God, being all-powerful, does not need man's work. The people who serve God best are those who are the most patient. God, like a great king, has thousands working for him unceasingly, but they also serve him who only wait patiently.

Question 6:

Candidates seemed to find difficulty in making a precise statement of the "nature of the theme" of the chosen poems. Since these poems are outstanding, this failure would seem to indicate that practice is needed in training candidates to answer the question, "To what factors does this poem owe its appeal?" For example, candidates should be able to comment upon the strangeness of the environment and the pathos of the separation in The Forsaken Merman; or upon the novelty of the sea-burial experience, the indifference of the passengers, and the author's active imaginings of the future fate of the corpse in Seascape; or upon the Newfoundland setting, the adventure, the daring of the seal-hunters, the realism of the action, and the irony of the outcome in The Ice Floes.

The selection of descriptive passages which were interesting to the reader was perhaps better handled. However, candidates still need to be encouraged to give expression to the influence that a selected passage has on their own imagination or emotions.

In some papers an allegorical interpretation of The Forsaken Merman was attempted. Frequently these attempted interpretations were fantastic.

The following answers to this question were considered satisfactory:

> The Forsaken Merman, in the novelty of its theme, appeals to something in us which has been dormant since we read our last nursery rhyme. The colourful and imaginative lives of these mythical beings take us out of our own dullness, into the romantic, if ornate, drawing rooms of the kings of the sea. Why should we remain in our wilderness of stone and brick and concrete, when the caves of the sea wait for us in such a poem?
>
> Once we have started to read, it is the imagery of the description that holds us. Who could be bored when he sits on a red-gold throne in the heart of the sea, where the spent lights quiver and gleam, watching the sea beasts feed in the ooze of their pasture ground. For a change we have only

to look up through the clear green sea and follow the maiden to the little brown church on the windy shore. How uninviting the earth is! Grey town, white walls, brown church, and windy shore are all that greet us. We want to go back to the sea, but we must stand shivering on the tombstones and look into the dark church, but we won't stay long, because that beautiful undersea life attracts us irresistibly.

The main interest in the poem "The Ice Floes" is the realistic picture painted, and the gripping story told.

The poet has given a tale of remarkable adventure. The theme of seal hunting is of great interest to all Canadians. Furthermore, the setting near Labrador enhances the interest. The tale of the industry of the workers is forgotten as soon as the description of the storm begins. Here the theme appeals to our emotions when the author tells of men futilely going to the westward in search of the "Eagle," and the horror of men being carried out to sea by the ice-pans. We notice a touch of irony in the thought in the poet's reference to the feverish lust of the hunters and the harvest of twenty thousand seals "to lower the price of bread."

The descriptions are outstanding in this poem. They serve both to inform and also to create the necessary atmosphere. The description of the habits of seals, and of the uncanny ability of the female to find its way back to its young is a subject of universal interest. The description of the method of hunting the seals is also informative. The description of the sudden storm creates an atmosphere of suspense. Metaphorically, the poet refers to the qualities necessary for survival as "iron and fire." The description of the hungry man pouncing on a dead seal is most interesting for its stark realism. The final description contains much pathos. We can picture clearly the ship sailing home, with a grief-stricken crew, and the flag at half-mast. The final scene, with the rolling of the drums in the church nave drives home the author's purpose and we see clearly the folly of humanity, both in reference to this particular incident and universally.

Question 7 (First option):

Many candidates found the development of contrasts easier than a discussion of the use of such contrasts. Some uses are: the development of character, the strengthening of a rather slender plot, and the provoking of thought on social problems.

Many candidates were unable to organize their answers in suitable form. By writing separate essays on two characters, or two situations, they frequently did not bring out the contrasts, and so failed to answer the question adequately.

The following answers to this question were considered satisfactory:

> In "The Garden Party" we find a definite contrast between Laura and her mother. Laura is unspoiled. She feels at home helping the workmen to prepare the marquee. Mrs. Sheridan is very sophisticated. She is too proud to have anything to do with them. Mrs. Sheridan is extravagant over anything she likes. She buys far too many lilies, a matter which Laura at once deplores. Laura is very sensitive to the feelings of others. She wishes to call off the garden party when she hears of the death of Mr. Scott. Her mother harshly tells her the party will go on. Laura, though, is easily distracted from her thoughts at the mention of her hat. Mrs. Sheridan is callously unaware of the feelings of others when she suggests the sending of the left-overs to Mrs. Scott. Laura, who recognizes their feelings, resists the idea. Mrs. Sheridan, in typical upper class manner, thinks it improper to even mention death at the table. Laura feels it a matter of common interest. Laura feels she must get to know the other classes. This is shown in her walks with Laurie through the lane below. Mrs. Sheridan abhors any thought of the lower class. She also has the desire to keep away from the unpleasantness of life. This is shown throughout the story in her avoiding of the death. Laura is extremely sensitive to all phases of life.

> The situation of the wealthy family is contrasted with that of the poor family. This is brought out by having the wealthy family live at the top of a high hill with the poor family at the bottom and a wide road separating them. The garden party at the top of the hill is symbolic of the customary mood there; whereas the death of a man at the bottom of a hill symbolizes the lives of the people. The garden of the wealthy family is very beautiful with its abundance of flowers, its lawn and trees; whereas the garden of the poor family is said to consist of a few cabbage stalks, empty tomato cans, and sick hens. Even Nature seems to say, "To him that hath shall be given and from him that hath not shall be taken away." Overnight the roses of the wealthy family came into bloom by the hundreds to make their day a success; while the poor family had their loved one and

means of an income taken away from them to make their lives unhappy. The clothes of the wealthy are described in all their brilliance and the clothes of the poor are described with dull colours. Even the smoke coming from the shacks at the bottom is described as being thin shreds; whereas the wealthy have lovely white smoke pouring from their chimneys. The wealthy family is described in the daytime with the sun shining on them; the poor are described at night in the dark.

Question 7 (Second option):

Candidates who had most difficulty with this question were those whose knowledge of short story structure and short story terminology was inadequate. A knowledge of the meaning and application of such terms as *introduction, setting, conflict, complication, denouement, suspense, climax* and *conclusion* is necessary. The following answer to this question was considered satisfactory:

In Robert's story "The Blackwater Pot" the description of the setting plays a major role in the development of the story. It serves as an introduction; the Blackwater Pot itself is described and the log formation, the eddy of waters, and the sluice are all portrayed to the reader. In this way, the reader's interest is immediately aroused, because the setting is so unusual. Next, Henderson is described as leaning leisurely against a white ragged birch, smoking his pipe. The whole scene appears to be peaceful and yet the turbulent waters of the Pot are rather disturbing to the reader. The story causes Henderson's thoughts to wander as he identifies himself with one of the logs whirling around in the Pot. Because of his dreaming, Henderson lays down his rifle and does not sense the ominous approach of Red Pichot and his pal Bug Mitchell. Therefore, Henderson is caught off-guard without his rifle. The setting in the Pot is of major importance now, because it provides the minor struggle in the story. Henderson, tied to one of the logs, is forced to use his resources and will-power to save himself from going out the sluice. When the rainstorm comes, the setting causes Pichot and Mitchell to retreat to their hide-out down the river a little way. Therefore the little girl is given an opportunity to rescue Henderson from the Pot. On the whole, the setting here in this story provides the atmosphere around which the plot centres. The whole episode takes place in New England and in the backwoods and it is a fitting place to have the struggle occur. The setting provides the just retribution at the end in that Pichot goes out the sluice.

Suspense is likewise used effectively in "The Blackwater Pot." At the first, the reader wonders why so much attention is given to the description of the setting, the logs and the sluice. Then when Henderson starts to dream, we wonder if he will be caught off guard. Later suspense is gained when Pichot captures Henderson, for we wonder whether he will kill him on the spot or not. When Henderson is strapped on top of the log, we wonder whether he will go out the sluice right away or whether he can save himself. In the description of the struggle in the Pot, we wonder whether Henderson will have the stamina and courage to hold out. Also suspense is built up in the possibility that Baisley's Sis may arrive. When the storm comes and Pichot and Mitchell retreat, we wonder if Henderson will receive any relief. Our suspense is heightened and a certain suspense is gained when the little girl does not arrive. Suspense is built up in their wait in the bushes for Pichot and Mitchell. We wonder what the outcome will be if a fight takes place. Suspense is relieved a little when Pichot falls into the Pot and goes out the sluice; but at the last minute we wonder if Mitchell will retaliate or hurt the little girl. Finally at the end, the tension is relieved in the safe capture of Mitchell. In these various instances, the element of suspense is present in the "Blackwater Pot."

Question 8 (First option):

A more careful study of this question would have revealed to many candidates that only the later stages of the Judea's voyage were to be considered, beginning with the entry into the Indian Ocean. Some candidates merely related the narrative of this portion of the voyage without mentioning what it revealed of the spirit of youth or Marlowe's particular feelings toward the situations involved; others generalized about the ideas of youth but failed to support their statements by definite references from the story. The following answer was considered satisfactory:

> As the days crawled on slowly, and the Judea crawled on even more slowly in her journey around the cape, the dogged determination of the captain and mate began to fray slowly and even the careless listlessness of the Liverpool crew began to give way. But youth, in its boundless energy and optimism, was satisfied. It was enough that Marlow was on his way to the East. He had lots of time, so speed did not matter. In this beautiful weather, accident seemed impossible, so he rode blissfully on toward the East, fulfillment of all his dreams and Bangkok its symbol.

But then, when the fire was discovered the adaptability of youth soon brought him around to the new situation. Fire could be fought. Stifling failed. Well, there was still water. Water failed. Try digging down to it. Two men fainted in the hold. Youth, infinitely egotistic, caused him to jump in "to show then how it could be done." It needed optimism to see the earth as a single translucent sapphire, and the East as an approaching reality, but the youth of Marlow had it aplenty. But youth was also loyal. Loyalty to the ship, to the frustrated and doting Captain, was part of Marlow's being. He gently told the captain about the explosion when he was worried about the cabin table. He left the captain to "commune with his first command," and later brought him away. It was romantic to him to wait and see the ship sink, regardless of the danger. Disregarding danger again, he overrigs his little boat "to reach the East first as commander of his own ship." Youth pushed him ahead and showed him the east "as a distant line in the morning, as a purple haze at noon and as a dark overhanging mass at night." He was almost dead from fatigue but he noticed the delicate scents on the breeze. Instead of sleeping on landing, he sat and absorbed the feel of the dark East. To him the raving sea-captain, the dark stolid natives and the sand-fringed blue of the bay were part of his initiation into the East. He remembers the East now from many aspects, but the one he loves is the view he got as a youth.

Question 8 (Second option):

Many candidates discussed the details of the story without adequately showing how the situations or events added interest to the romance of Dick and Fancy. To have done justice to this question the candidate should have organized his material in the form of a small essay. Good answers showed the influence on the romance of such phases of the story as the role of Mrs. Endorfield, the rivalry of Dick and Mr. Shinar, Mr. Maybold's interest in Fancy, the difference in the social and educational backgrounds of Fancy and Dick, and the use made of Wessex pleasures and customs. The following answer to this question was considered satisfactory:

> Right from the first of the story "Under the Greenwood Tree," the romance of Dick and Fancy is interesting because it seems so one sided. Dick's extreme joy at seeing Fancy, on dancing with her and even looking at the crumbs she had left, is not shown in Fancy over Dick. The romance is interesting because Dick seems less suited to Fancy and to

have less chance of winning her than the other two suitors. He wins our sympathy because of this. Shinar has paid much attention to Fancy, much to Dick's consternation, and because of his wealth and self-confidence, Fancy's father favours him. Maybold, who has had a better education and presents to Fancy better opportunities to continue her music, seems best suited to Fancy. Dick has nothing to offer her except his love.

Even when Fancy promises to marry Dick there is one condition "If father will let me"—father wouldn't. The trick Fancy played, her witchcraft, is humorous as well as interesting. The father was completely "taken." Even then, they must wait until next summer. In the meantime comes Maybold's proposal. Again there is suspense and also dramatic irony when Maybold meets Dick and Dick tells him he is going to marry Fancy. There is, however, no very great, or lingering object standing in the way of the romance throughout the whole story. The little things interest us—Fancy's love of flattery and Dick's jealousy; for example, when Fancy had both curls and a feather, when Dick was not to see her. Fancy was selfish both with her time, when she spent the afternoon fixing her dress and with her possessions, when she preferred to keep the cup and spoon and give Dick the saucer and knife. Fancy was conceited and Dick was very humble. Many incidents impart special interest to the romance, both great and small, incidents which may have humour, irony or even sadness, but we are satisfied in the end for we feel that Dick and Fancy will be happy and contented.

Question 9:

Many candidates showed a tendency to describe the thought of the poem in part (a) rather than to comment upon the structure.

In part (b) they frequently offered contrasts in thought rather than contrasts in descriptive detail.

In general, part (c) was well answered. In some answers the idea of pleasure gained from the poet's own thoughts was ignored. The following answers to this question were considered satisfactory:

(a) This is one of Lampman's sonnets. He caught the idea of Rossetti to compose descriptive sonnets of Canadian scenes. This is an Italian sonnet, having octave and sestet, but instead of the octave presenting the question or problem

and the sestet the answer or solution, there is a change of picture and atmosphere. The octave deals with the dusk and the first falling of the snow, with some action in the carts and the ploughman. The sestet deals with the night, accentuated by the gleam of lamps, the 'wintry white' of the snow, and the quietness and inactivity broken only by the moan of the 'bleak winds.' The last two lines seem to change the atmosphere from coldness and bleakness to inward warmth.

(b) 'Turning the black furrows through the whitening field' is a good descriptive contrast with the darkness of the rich black earth and the white hue of the falling snow. The bright yellow light which the lamps in the village shed is contrasted to the darkness and stinging cold of the night.

(c) Although the rest of the world is about to be gripped in the cold merciless grasp of winter the author feels neither sad nor shelterless for his mind is taken up with many thoughts which compass him about as a blanket. He is kept, comfortable and happy, well able to dream his dreams and to watch his life go on its way.

2. THE ENGLISH COMPOSITION EXAMINATION OF 1948

The following comments on the Upper School examination of 1948 in English Composition are made in the hope that they will prove useful to teachers of this subject. It should be understood, however, that the allotment of marks and the method of marking used in this examination will not necessarily apply in the future, except that, according to the Courses of Study (Circular H.S. 1B, Jan. 1948), 60 marks are prescribed for the essay part of the paper.

I. *General Comment*

The results from the 1948 paper showed a lower percentage both of firsts and of failures by comparison with those of recent years. The examiners felt that the standard of achievement reached by the candidates was fairly high, especially in their avoidance of serious errors in syntax and sentence structure. On the other hand many candidates missed a first by their inability to meet the requirements of question 3. Generally speaking, the script, neatness, and spacing of the answers were satisfactory. Spelling deductions averaged about 3 per paper.

II. *Question 1, The Essay—60 marks*

1. The standards for the grading of the essay were substantially the same as those given in the 1945 Memorandum, which were as follows:

"Essays comparatively free from errors but commonplace might receive from 30 to 35 marks.

Essays which were still commonplace but revealed some power of organization and had some merit in either content or style might receive from 36 to 39 marks.

Those in the next higher grade, 40 to 44 marks, showed merit in style or content, were competently handled, and were somewhat interesting.

We now come to essays from 45 to 60 marks, that is, first class honour work in this part of the paper. These essays showed merit in content and style. They did not need to be brilliant, but those written plainly and in a straightforward style, if interesting, would be considered in this group. If the essay could be called attractive, meritorious, if it had good content, and indicated some consciousness of word values and of effective sentence structure, it would receive from 45 to 50. If there was decided excellence in either content or style, such as a comprehensive and intimate knowledge of subject matter, freshness of thought, skill in arrangement, command of sentence structure, or consciousness of word values, the essay would receive from 51 to 55. If all these excellencies were present and the essay showed distinction and individuality in style the mark could be from 56 to 60, and it is cheering to note that 60 marks were given, not once, but several times."

2. It should be emphasized once more that essays were graded on their positive merits in the first place and penalized for errors only in the second place. This means that essays were not marked in a negative way according to the number of errors, but that positive credit was given for merits in spite of errors. Merits which guided the examiners were as follows, listed in an ascending scale of value:

(a) Content which, though commonplace perhaps, showed that the candidate had brought his mind to bear on the subject and was mature enough to proceed to university work;

(b) The ability to organize this content into a clear, well-paragraphed, unified piece of writing;

(c) The ability to interest the reader by ideas, details, reasoning, convincing enthusiasm, or style.

As may be surmised, the most meritorious essays by these standards were also the most correct. An essay with a few major errors was passed if it revealed compensating merits. A childish or immature essay was failed even if correctly written. The large number of essays at the credit level suggested that the ideas many students deal in, on an examination at least, are commonplace or even trivial, and that they should be encouraged to exercise their sincerity, observation, and personal point of view in their writing.

3. Very few candidates showed the ability to write something worthwhile within the prescribed limits. Most of the better essays were somewhat longer than the length of "about 250 to 350 words" suggested in the question. Candidates should be advised that 250 words is a minimum requirement.

4. The errors listed in the 1947 Memorandum (page 12) occurred frequently, although not so often. The commonest errors on the 1948 papers were "the comma blunder," faulty ellipsis or incomplete comparison, faulty pronoun reference, and bad punctuation, particularly of quoted speech.

5. Insofar as vocabulary and diction are concerned, the candidates showed that they needed more training in the use of words with precision, economy, and good taste. Many candidates, particularly those writing description, showed a fondness for an inflated, false-literary style. For example, "As Aurora cast her amber rays across the matted turf, I was awakened by the shrill clarion of the cock, and dashed to the window in my bunnies" (slippers?).

6. Insofar as sentence structure is concerned, most candidates showed that they could write a clear, correct sentence, but not many showed that they considered the sentence much more than "a group of words expressing a complete thought." Effective sentences, with mature co-ordination or subordination of clauses, balanced, parallel, or periodic in structure, were relatively few.

7. The following essay was considered to be all that could reasonably be expected of a grade XIII candidate writing under examination conditions and was given full marks:

> "Truth generally is kindness, but where the two diverge or collide, kindness should override truth."
>
> That truth generally is kindness is evident. Every man wants to know the truth, particularly about himself and his actions, and to attempt to cloak truth with tact is the antithe-

sis of kindness. It is, after all, in the field of personalities and human relationships that kindness and truth are most often confused. A man's life is shaped largely by the opinions of others about him and it is an act of undecided unkindness to conceal those opinions from him.

That truth and kindness do, on occasion, collide is also true and proposes a serious question of morality. Judged on a basis of modern pragmatism an untruth is justified if its results are more desirable than those of the truth. There is a quaint French story about a postman who keeps from an old woman the news that her son is dead, himself forging letters to her and sending her small sums of money. Both the postman and the woman are made the happier and nobody suffers. Surely this is sufficient justification for the lie.

The story of "Javert" in "Les Miserables" is a well-known one in which Hugo has portrayed the two forces in Javert. The one is Javert's fanatical devotion to enforcing the letter of the law and pitted against it is the realization of the incompetence of the law to deal justly with fortune's victims. The parallel is obvious, between the stern moralist, who demands "the whole truth and nothing but the truth" and the humanitarian who believes morals were made for man and his benefit, and not man for morals.

Nowhere in the teachings of Christ are we told to revere morals above human welfare. Christ is continually pleading for a new attitude toward morals, one which applies them to human welfare instead of raising them as fit subjects of worship.

What the argument boils down to then, is whether the good of man (which must be accepted as the result of true kindness) is more or less important than the moral code established to direct his behaviour. The moral code, which inculcates respect for truth is something that appeared with man's first glimmerings of intelligence, and has developed as essential to sane and peaceful human relations. The greatest mistake is made in elevating truth to the position of a despot to whose rule all must bow. Truth has developed as a servant of man and his welfare and no reasonable humanitarian will raise it above that status.

8. The essay from which the following passage is printed was failed as being immature:

Ever since anyone can remember there have been dogs, all shapes and sizes. These dogs ate the food that people left when they moved on to the next vicinity. Soon the dogs were accustomed to being around people and the dogs were friends with the people. They found comfort and food with them and wanted no more.

To-day there are many kinds of dogs. The spaniel is everybody's favourite. There are three breeds of spaniels, water spaniel, retriever and plain everyday spaniel. They aren't rough dogs and can be taught many tricks. Because they are so friendly and not rough, many people have them for their children to play with. The setter is a large dog and they are usually used for retrieving. They originally came from Ireland and hence the name Irish setter. Scotties are small black dogs with shaggy fur. Some scotties are white but these are scarce and expensive. Besides these dogs there are many more but, the great majority of dogs are a mixture of several breeds.

III. *Question 2, Vocabulary—5 marks*

1. One mark was given for each definition. The word had to be defined as it was used in the context. The candidate did not have to name the part of speech, but he had to explain the word as the proper part of speech. Meanings in the form of a word, a phrase, or a sentence were acceptable. A word defined in terms of itself received no mark.

2. Candidates who used a number of synonyms in their definitions often made contradictions which lost them the mark. For example, "taciturn—silent, uncouth, boorish."

3. Candidates who used a sentence form of answer sometimes committed errors in sentence structure and thereby lost marks. For example, "Ingenuous is where one is frank."

IV. *Question 3, Grammar—10 marks*

1. One mark was given for each word used correctly in the completed sentence and one mark for each satisfactory reason.

2. Examples of answers which received full marks:

(d) This is one of the worst books that *have* ever been written.

The plural verb *have* must be used because the subject *that* refers to the plural noun *books*.

(e) My food tastes *bad.*

Tastes in this sentence is a copula verb. *Bad* (adj.) is required to modify the noun *food.*

3. A logical reason, not necessarily employing grammatical terms, was accepted. An example of such an answer to (d) was "The meaning of the sentence is that many bad books *have* been written, of which the book referred to is an example. A re-arrangement of the sentence shows this "of the worst books that have been written, this is one."

4. The average mark per paper for this question, was less than 5. Answers revealed a general ignorance of grammatical terms and an inability to determine the relationship of words in sentences. Reasons were often carelessly stated.

V. *Question 4, The Precis—25 marks*

1. 16 marks were assigned for matter and 9 for style.

2. Matter

(a) To receive 16 marks for matter, a candidate must have included in his answer 8 essential points. A point clearly and completely stated received 2 marks. For example, "Lincoln appeared to be an average product of his generation, but he was essentially different from the ordinary Westerner." To receive 2 marks for this point, the candidate should have noted the significance of the words *apparently* and a*t bottom* in the original.

(b) Generally speaking, the candidate selected most of the important points of the original passage.

(c) Certain faults were penalized by specific deductions. One mark was deducted for the first 10 words in excess of 140, (stipulated length 130) and an additional mark for each succeeding 10 words up to a maximum of 16 marks. Candidates should be advised that all words are counted, including articles and prepositions. On the other hand, they should be warned that the use of artificial compounds, and the omission of pronouns and articles reduce their mark. A precis of less than the required length usually lacked several of the required points.

One mark was deducted for the introduction of each extraneous point not present in the original. For example, "Lincoln was the greatest president of the United States."

One mark was deducted for each distortion of a point in the original. For example, "Lincoln condemned the aristocracy and the established church."
Situations arose from the failure to appreciate the relationship of ideas as well as from a misreading of the original. For example, "Because his political and moral standards were those of his associates, they thought him lazy."

3. Style.

(a) The précis was judged by the standards of an independent paragraph. Full marks were given for a concise, coherent, correct style. The sentence in the question, "Your version should be expressed largely in your own words," was taken to mean that the candidate should aim at presenting the essential meaning of the original, using his own words when necessary for purposes of condensation.

(b) Lack of variety in sentence structure, incomplete comparisons i.e., "Lincoln's life was similar to many Western politicians," lack of linking words, which tended to make the precis a series of disconnected statements, were the commonest faults of style.

(c) Some candidates lost marks for style by using levels of language out of keeping with the original, i.e., gags, pals, bon-mots.

(d) Some candidates were too detailed or verbose in their statement of one or two points, and thus omitted some essential points and gave their version a wrong emphasis and proportion.

4. The following précis was given full marks:

Until 1858 Abraham Lincoln's outer life closely resembled that of other Western politicians and lawyers. From poverty and ignorance in boyhood, Lincoln had worked his way to a position of moderate distinction. He was neither a brilliant success nor a hopeless failure; he was respected as honest and competent but was not considered remarkable. Although he desired recognition, ambition had not dominated

his career. His political and moral standards were those of his associates; his aims were not consciously higher than theirs. Most of his successful associates probably thought him able but lazy, and an English traveller of 1850 would certainly have found in his social habits another example of American vulgarity. Thus he appeared to be an average product of his generation, but nevertheless, he was essentially different from the ordinary Westerner.

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